

St. John the Theologian  
Russian Orthodox Church  
Perryville  
Alaska ~~LAKE AND PENINSULA~~

HABS No. AK-72

HABS  
AK,  
5-PERV.,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HAB5  
AK  
5-PERV,  
1-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

HABS No. AK-72

Location: Perryville, Alaska Peninsula, Alaska.

Present Owner: Alaska Diocese, Orthodox Church in America.

Present Occupant: St. John the Theologian Russian Orthodox Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: A number of historic Russian Orthodox churches survive in Alaska, built by Native congregations in traditional forms. Built in about 1912, the Perryville church has received several additions, reflecting a growing congregation. The gable-roofed nave is flanked by hip-roofed sanctuary and vestibule.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1910s. Perryville was founded in 1912 by villagers from Metrofan and Katmai.
2. Original plans and construction: The church was considerably smaller than it is now, having been added onto on both ends. The wood-framed, gable-roofed church has a rectangular plan, with the sanctuary located in a separate, smaller room on the east end.
3. Alterations and additions: The church was moved from its original site, where the school is located now, in 1923. The nave was extended to the west on two separate occasions, and the sanctuary appears to have been extended to the east. These additions are marked by a change in fabric on the exterior. The cupola originally had windows, but these have been closed off. In the 1980s, the original four-over-four-light sash was replaced by single sash of smaller dimensions, and the openings around it filled in with plywood.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Hip-roofed sanctuary and vestibule frame the elongated, gable-roofed nave.
2. Condition of fabric: fair.

ST. JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN  
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
HABS No. AK-72 (Page 2)

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The nave measures 18'-9" x 36'-9". The sanctuary on the east measures 13'-1" x 12'-8", and the vestibule on the west measures 13'-3" x 8'-1".
2. Foundations: Not visible.
3. Walls: The nave and sanctuary walls are covered with beveled siding, and some horizontal planks, painted white with aqua trim. The east end of the sanctuary is covered with wood shingles. The vestibule is covered with novelty siding.
4. Structural system: wood frame.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The doors are plain double doors.
  - b. Windows: Fixed single sash.
6. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The nave roof is gabled, covered with wood shingles and some corrugated metal. The sanctuary has a hipped roof, also covered with wood shingles. The vestibule has a hipped roof, covered with asphalt.
  - b. Cupolas: There is an octagonal cupola over the nave, topped by a cross.
7. Bells: Bells are hung on a bell stand south of the vestibule.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The nave is one open space, separated from the sanctuary on the east by the iconostas. The vestibule is on the west.
2. Stairways: There is a one-step amvon with a semi-circular projection in the center.
3. Flooring: The flooring is plywood, with some wall-to-wall carpeting.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: There is a wainscot of beveled vertical boards. Above, the walls and ceiling are covered with a masonite material.
5. Doorways: There are double doors, of three horizontal panels below four lights, between the vestibule and the nave.

ST. JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN  
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
HABS No. AK-72 (Page 3)

6. Decorative features: The iconostas is wood-framed, with beveled boards, laid horizontally, and box columns with stars on the capitals. The three doorways are flat-arched, and the royal doors have an inverted arch. The icons are all oil on canvas.
7. Mechanical equipment: The building is equipped with electricity and an oil furnace.

D. Site:

Set in the middle of town, the church faces west, with its altar on the east, as is traditional among Russian Orthodox churches. A new church is under construction, just south of the present one.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Kosbruk, Ignatius, church member and Perryville resident, interviewed by author September 13, 1990.

Wallace, Fern A. The Flame of the Candle. Chilliwack, B.C.: SS. Kyril and Methody Society, 1974. Plate 72 shows the building before the westernmost addition to the nave, and before the window sash was changed.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of St. John the Theologian Russian Orthodox Church was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, the state of Alaska, and the Icon Preservation Task Force. The project was executed under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, and Boyd Evison, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service. Recording was carried out during summer 1990 by Steven M. Peterson, project director; Jet Lowe, photographer; and Alison K. Hoagland, historian, who prepared this report.

ADDENDUM TO  
ST. JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
Perryville  
Aleutian Islands  
Alaska

HABS No. AK-72

HABS  
AK  
5-PERV,  
1-

XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013